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ABSTRACT

A recent study was made by classroom teachers to determine why junior high school students were having difficulty in learning to read. More than half of the students who read below grade level appeared to lack motivation. A closed circuit television system was combined with other materials--including kits, book, listening centers--and called the Graphics Expression Reading Improvement System (GERIS). The teacher's objective was to help students improve their reading skills and to provide practice in using these skills effectively. Each student's objective was to produce a tape that he could show to classmates or his parents. The GERIS program utilized an eight-step process in which help was given in the reading lab on a one-to-one basis, and students were programed into those skills and materials they needed most. The program to this point has been successful in motivating students to read. (RB)

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USING VIDEOTAPE TO MOTIVATE JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS TO READ

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USING VIDEOTAPE TO MOTIVATE JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS TO READ

Motivating students to want to read is as important as teaching them how to read. A careful study was done by classroom teachers within the Uniondale Public Schools as to why children were having difficulty in learning to read. More than 50% of the pupils who read below grade level appeared to lack motivation for wanting to learn to read. As a result of this study, a search was made for some means of providing the motivation needed. A closed circuit television system known as the Videographics System seemed designed to fulfill our demands.

The Videographics System can best be described as a mini-television studio. It has two standing cameras, which face onto a table where visual materials can be placed, and a movable camera. There is a control panel which permits the youngster to switch and fade from one camera to another.

Since a number of the pupils who read below grade level are included in our remedial reading program, it was decided to integrate the Videographics into the existing program. Therefore, we now have what are known as Reading/Graphics Laboratories. Each laboratory is

equipped with a Videographics System along with many other materials including kits, books, listening centers, etc., that are usually found in any other remedial reading program. Our Reading/Graphics rooms are staffed by a remedial reading teacher, a graphics teacher and a teaching assistant. Basic responsibilities are split between the two professional people. The reading teacher is basically responsible for teaching the reading skills in which the student needs help and in helping the student to utilize these skills. The graphics teacher's responsibility is to help the youngster develop a script which he is then capable of taping. In actual operation, many of these duties over-lap and so both of the professionals within the Reading/Graphics labs often share responsibilities.

The program is now officially known as the Graphics Expression Reading Improvement System. Through the GERIS Program it is possible for both teachers and students to reach their objectives. The teacher's objective is to help the student improve his reading skills and to provide practice in using these skills most effectively. The student's objective is to produce a tape that he can show to fellow classmates or to his parents. Both of these objectives are mutually agreeable.

The GERIS Program utilizes an eight step process in which the pupils are constantly involved.

Step 1. Pick a topic - Students are encouraged to choose a topic which they would like to read about and tape. Since some of the students have developed few interests, many teachers will often introduce a unit of work and help the students develop a particular aspect of the unit. Let me illustrate...A teacher recently suggested to the student that each of them might want to demonstrate how to build or make something. As a means of developing their interest, she played several card tricks. After she had gone through the process several times she then outlined the steps she had taken to perform the demonstration. Students were encouraged to also plan a demonstration but to do something that was of particular interest to them. Follow-up activities might involve cooking, sewing, woodworking, learning how to play a game, etc. Once the idea has been determined, it is then possible to begin preparation of the script.

Step 2. Do research - Research involves reading. Because many students are willing to read in their area of interest, such reading does not appear onerous to them. For some students, researching

may be using magazines pre-selected by the teacher to find facts that pertain to their topic. Other pupils with higher reading skills may actually use the library, with its many facilities, to select books for their project. All types of reading and visual materials are used. In some instances, pupils who are at very low reading levels listen to a tape and follow the text in the book. At times, an aide or one of the teachers will read the material to the student. But in all cases, the student is, through one means or another, gathering the basic information that is needed to write a script to be taped. Unbeknownst to the students, they are utilizing known reading skills under careful direction. The student may also be receiving some skill instruction that is of immediate need to him to gain the information he seeks.

Step 3. Prepare Graphics - Along with the reading research that is needed to develop a script, the student must also search for pictorial material that he can use to illustrate his script. He is encouraged to look for pictures in magazines and books which will illustrate his topic. (Pictures from books are photo-copied.) If he can locate no

pictorial material he will sometimes use his own skills to draw pictures, make diaramas, or develop tables or graphs to help him to have some visual representation to add to the tape.

Step 4. Write a script - Now that he has collected a variety of pictorial material and a number of ideas from his readings, the pupil is ready to put together a script. In order for him to write a script he must be able to organize his ideas. He must recognize and state main ideas, develop and enrich these ideas with details, and put them into sequential order. His scrint must be written using complete sentences and paragraphs. Since many students either do not possess these skills or do not use them effectively, considerable time is spent developing them. Scripts are reviewed, corrected and then copied in the pupils' own handwriting. This last step is quite an important one. For the first time students realize the necessity for developing legible handwriting. If his script is illegible, he cannot read it. If, because of the illegibility he makes many reading errors, he develops first hand knowledge of the importance of good handwriting.

Step 5. Practice reading the script - Once the script is in its final form, the pupil practices reading it aloud. He has several means of doing this. He can read it to a teacher or to a fellow student. He may wish to tape his script so he knows how he sounds. By replaying the tape he notes where he must make changes in his reading. He also notes errors or may even change his script to read more smoothly.

Step 6. Record a run-through - When the student feels that he is capable of reading his script, when his pictures are prepared and mounted, and he has marked his script to include the pictures, he may then request a run-through on the tape. Pupils usually cooperate in teams of four for a smoother presentation. This makes it possible for a student to have helpers who will handle the pictorial material, the cameras and the videotape recorder. Cue cards are often used at the junior high level. This makes it possible for more eye contact with the camera.

Step 7. Evaluate the tape - The team, with the help of the teacher, makes an evaluation of the tape. Each student makes suggestions of ways the student might improve his presentation. Such

suggestions might include more eye contact with the camera, more practice in reading the script, better voice projection, more emphasis, etc. It is sometimes suggested that more pictures are needed or a paragraph should be added at some point to make it more interesting. Once an evaluation has been made the student takes time to make the necessary changes.

Step 8. Record the final tape - The last step in the whole process occurs as soon as the student feels that he is ready to make his final tape. With the aid of his helpers, he retapes. No tape is considered final until the student feels it is the best he can do at that moment. If the student wishes the tape to be shown to his classmates, or to his parents, opportunities are provided for this.

The Videographics System of and by itself will never teach a student to read. But couple this system with a creative teacher and students who have been "turned-off", and you now have a winning combination.

Throughout the eighth step process, which has been outlined above, the reading teacher is constantly working with the student on the development of needed skills. As the student does his research, the teacher may offer him reading helps that will permit him to read the material

with greater ease. During the writing of the script, the student may be receiving help with spelling or composition. Some students need only the encouragement offered by the teacher. During the practice step, the reading teacher may help the student to read aloud with greater expression or help him develop a great feeling for the material at hand.

Help is given in the Reading Graphics Lab on a one-to-one basis, and pupils are programmed into those skills and materials that it is found they need most. At the conclusion of a script, pupils often spend additional time with the reading teacher working in particular skill areas that have proved troublesome. Throughout the process it is hoped that as the student moves through the school year, each script that he works on will be done on a much higher level than the previous one. It is for this reason that constant help is given.

The results of the Videographics Program have been, at moments,startling. During the first six months the equipment was available, it was used with a sixth grade class in a school where there were many pupils whom teachers felt lacked motivation but had few problems in other areas. In a period of five months, 15 children who were seen for one hour a day made an average of two years growth; a growth of over two years in vocabulary, a

growth of slightly under two years in comprehension. Since that time we have had the same type of results, even though included in the program are children who have had many types of problems. During the 1972/73 school year, a study was done by the New York State Education Department. They analyzed the data of the GERIS Program. Part of their findings indicated that there was a highly significant improvement at the grade 4 - 6 level. It was felt that the majority of students achieved nearly twice the rate they had under previous traditional programs. At the grade 7 - 9 level the results were not as great, although the grade 7 group did achieve a highly significant growth. This was over one year's growth for pupils who usually had attained approximately five month's growth each year.

While the GERIS Program does not meet the needs of every pupil, it does go a long way in helping students who have been turned off on reading. While the student's objective is to make a tape and appear on television, he is also improving his reading skills. Many of the students now in the program do not need help in development of new skills. In fact, many of them have probably been over-skilled. The GERIS Program does provide utilization of known skills and provides insight as to the purpose of

reading. Students are experiencing the enjoyment of reading and learning how to use it to gain needed information. This is what the GERIS Program helps them to do.